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HISTORICAL SOCIETY OF SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA.

LOS ANGELES, 1897.

PRESIDENT'S INAUGURAL ADDRESS.

BY DR. J. D. MOODY.

[Delivered February 1, 1897.]

Members of the Historical Society of Southern California:

Before entering upon our work for a new year, let us stop for a little while upon the threshold, look around, and see where we stand among the educational factors of our city. An historical society should be recognized as one of the educational institutions of the community, and should be appealed to as such. It should command both the respect and the attention of all intelligent citizens. If it is our aim to be one of the educational forces of our city, let us first try to get a proper understanding of the possibilities that lie in our way, if, haply, we may be stirred to newer life, both in our chosen field, and also out into broader lines. Among the many societies in Los Angeles, ours is the only one which in any way occupies the historical field, unless possible exception could be made in the case of the Society for Preserving Old Missions. We must occupy the field fully, or we will surely be supplanted by other less pretentious associations. Ours should be the center out from which these other organizations would grow. I confess to a little feeling of jealousy that the incentive to, or, at least, a prominent part in, this work among the old missions, should not have attached to this society.

A Folk-lore Society, an Ethnological Society, and kindred associations, should be formed in, or by our society. Instead of so-

cieties, we might form sections for the special study of these topics, in order to make them auxiliary to our work. It may be objected that we did have sections at one time with no profitable result. But I protest that geological and botanical studies do not properly come under an historical head. The Science Association is their proper home. But all studies having in their origin a human interest properly belong to our society. We should be looked up to as authority worth considering in all questions in any way touching upon historical subjects in our city and State.

In order to command attention, our society must be in some way, more prominently brought before the public. I will refer to this later. Of late years historical studies have assumed an importance which they never before had. Before this time, written history was full of events; now, it is full of human interest; then it was full of blood and death; now, it throbs with human life.

This is largely the result of the work along new lines, upon which these studies have been carried out. Prof. Green's "History of the English People" is a notable example of this newer method of historical study, as is also McMaster's history of our own people. When Prof. Green's book was first published the value of this method was at once recognized, and henceforth the acceptable history will be the one dealing with people and their social development, rather than with personal ambition and national wars. The citizen, rather than the soldier, will be the object of study. More attention will be given to the social and intellectual conditions which made it possible for a Napoleon or a Tweed to be, rather than to the detailed list of the wars of the one or the stealings of the other. It would even be possible to write a great history of our civil war, with hardly more than a mention of battle in it.

It was really the differences in the social characteristics and the resultant growth from these in the English settlements in the Carolinas, the Scotch in Georgia, and the mountain region; the French in Louisiana, the Puritans and the Germans in the North, that brought about the conflict and shaped its course. These racial differences, developing different social conditions and mental characteristics, and, becoming more firmly stamped in character as the years went by; these, along with the modifying influences each had on the other, are factors of prime importance, and intensely human in their interest and which must not for a moment be lost sight of in any conception of the development and duration of the struggle.

Our historical literature of recent date shows a tendency to base history upon the life of a people, rather than upon their wars. But to write such a history it is necessary to have the minutiae of the daily life, social and intellectual, of a people. In the historical classes of Johns Hopkins University the students are set at just such work. In further pursuance of these studies, old town records, church registers, colonial archives, and similar sources, are searched. Many of their students embody the results of such investigations in monographs, and histories of cities, towns, counties, families and institutions. These, in their turn, furnish the future historian with material for his work. I speak of these methods of treating historical studies because of the bearing it has upon our work. It is just the kind of work we should do.

The active period, embracing the time of transferal from Mexican to American authority, the brilliant achievements of Gen. Fremont and other early explorers, all have a very great interest for us. Yet, of far greater value would it be, did our records show a complete account of the communal life of our State from the earliest period; their social customs, their political fabric, their industrial habits, and their intellectual growth. It should be the aim of our society to do this work, and to do it in some systematic manner. For the future historian of California these facts would be of incomparable value. Much has been done in this line, but much more needs to be done. Much of just such information is scattered through the books and papers of the olden time, is easily overlooked, and liable to be lost. This should be secured before it is too late.

An almost perfect specimen of one kind of work we need to do was given us in a paper, "Christmas Week at San Juan Capistrano," (I believe this was the title,) by our former president Prof. Polley. Prof. Guinn has given us others in his articles in the Los Angeles Times. Such articles have a permanent value. We cannot have too many of them. My brief acquaintance in the city leads me to think that we must have others who are able, could they only be persuaded, to write such papers. It is our province as a society to collect the materials for, not to write, a history.

New Mexico, Arizona and Southern California occupy a unique place in our national life. This place is founded upon an older position, geographical and social, which is alike unique in our historical records. These States are linked together by this chain of historical events, that makes it impossible to treat of only a part without

doing violence to the whole. Are there associations kindred to ours, in these Territories? If so, we should cultivate relations with them that would be to our mutual benefit; if not, I believe we ought to aid in developing such. In the mean time, we should hold some kind of official relations with individuals in these States, thus making them tributary to our society, and so an aid to its usefulness. This Territory does not occupy the place in our school histories which its past history and its importance demands. In our State school history, California is given only twenty-five pages, and to the story of these other States, hardly a word. I believe this local history should occupy a much larger place in our school study, than is now given to it.

There is a vast country lying at our door, which is just emerging from a semi-barbaric state, but with such strides that she will soon be one of the great civilized countries of the world. We are destined to come into much closer relationship with her. New Mexico, Arizona and Southern California, more than any other portion of the territory acquired from Mexico, retains much of the quaint history which attaches to the mother country, and along with it, and inherited from her, much of the old custom and family traits not to be found in any other portion of our country. This lends a peculiar interest to this region, which does not pertain to any other portion of our land. The laws and customs of the early Spanish emigrants have left a lasting impression on these States. Since the completion of the Santa Fé Railroad, making a direct communication with the East, a great rush of immigration to this southern country has taken place. These new-comers are largely of the cultured class. They bring with them the rush and whirl of the East. The influx being so great and so sudden we are in danger of making the same mistake made by the early colonists of the Middle West, when they transplanted bodily the customs and ideas of their eastern homes, to the extent that the importance of the early and contemporaneous history was not fully recognized, much of it was lost and undue prominence given to the established history and customs of their old homes. These facts are being recognized by many of our later historians. In the December meeting of the American Historical Association, Prof. Turner of Wisconsin read a paper, on "The West as a Field for Historical Study." In this paper, quoting from the Associated Press reports, he says, "that too much stress has been laid on the work of the colonists of the East, while the settlement, progress and develop-

ment of the States of the West have been entirely overlooked. The expansion of the country into the unsettled tracts of the West has furnished some of the most fundamental characteristics." Substitute the words "Great Southwest" for the words "States of the West," in the above quotation, and the passage will be as applicable to us as to the Eastern States. We are building on different foundations than they, and are developing characteristics as peculiar in their way, as those of the dwellers on the Atlantic slope. It is of prime importance that these characteristics be recorded while in process of development. It is my conviction that the work of our society should proceed along two lines: First and foremost, the gathering of such information as suggested, in our Southwest, and secondly, broadening out into a fuller discussion of general history. By doing so we would enlist the sympathy and coöperation of all classes. I believe good would come of it.

May I not further outline my idea of our future work? First, can we not devise some plan by which, with united effort, we can enlist more of our intelligent and educated citizens in the work of the society. This would make our meetings more interesting, and more profitable, possibly, by arousing an interest in some one who, emulating the princely gift of Mr Griffith, may provide us with a permanent home for our meetings, and for our collection.

I really believe, however, that an historical society should bear a sort of semi-official relation to the State, or to the commercial center of that region where it is located, and by the State or such city, be provided with every facility for gathering and preserving the records of their locality.

A few public lectures during the year, by some citizen, or some visitor to our city, on some special or general historical subject that would be of popular interest, would keep our society before the public. The old adage, "Out of sight, out of mind," has a good deal of wisdom in it.

If ever we should make a special effort to get out an audience, the papers of the evening should be popular in their nature, and full of human interest.

The Y.M.C.A. had a course of lectures, this past year, given by such men as our Postmaster, the Chief of Police, the electrician to the railroad company, etc. Two or three lectures on the history, ethnology or folk-lore of Southern California, might be just the means to awaken an interest in our history, in the minds of some of our young men.

The articles which our secretary has published from time to time in the city papers, have been exceedingly interesting, and have permanent value for historical study. I don't know whether Prof. Guinn has been filing these articles with the papers of the society or not, but I believe they should be, and I will take the liberty of asking him to do it. I don't want to take anything from Prof. Guinn's honor, but rather want to share that honor, justly belonging to one of our chief members, and would like if he could sign all such as a member or secretary of the Historical Society.

There should be, it seems to me, a closer relation between our schools and the society—between the public library and the society. Have we an historical scrap book? More than one member should be making such a book by culling from the papers of the day.

I believe we should make a special effort to collect the folk-lore of the Indians, the Spanish and the Mexicans of this region. This subject is today one of the most helpful auxiliaries to the student of history.

An historical day at our Long Beach Chautauqua might be made profitable to ourselves and to the audience.

Have the histories of the Pasadena, Ontario, Pomona, and other colonies in Southern California been written, and, if so, have we copies of them? We should have.

We also should have a catalogue of every manuscript or other documents in any way relating to Southern California, now in existence in our locality. A systematic effort should be made to obtain these papers, and where not possible to do that, to get a synopsis of their contents. I am aware that this has been done by outside parties to some extent, but we want it for ourselves for future use.

I believe we ought to appoint or procure some one or more persons, who would make a list of all old-time residents of this and other localities, and of the pioneers of the new order of things, and by personal interviews, based upon a prearranged plan, make exhaustive collections of early traditions, and accounts of events and social customs of those early days. This would take time. It ought to take time; but it would well repay the trouble.

The illness of our secretary prevented our making an exhibit at the Home Products Exhibition. But could we not have in the near future, either by ourselves, or in connection with some other body, a loan exhibition of historical books, papers, maps, charts, etc., etc.? Such exhibitions have been made profitable in other cities.

They have an educational value that we might well take advantage of.

Possibly the Chamber of Commerce would aid us by loaning a room for such a purpose at some fitting time. The Chamber of Commerce is accumulating the beginnings of an historical exhibit that may develop into a permanent institution. Cannot we make advances to them which will be mutually profitable?

California literature is fairly well-represented in our public library, but could we not help to make it more valuable by well-considered assistance?

If arrangements could be made by which the library would give temporary shelving for our books and papers, as a separate collection, for the use of the public, and under the direction of the library board, it would put to good use valuable matter now unattainable.

Through the ravages of time, old books of travel and history are being rapidly destroyed. I would like to see a collection of such books begun by this society, possibly in connection with the public library. The constant scanning of second-hand book catalogues would gradually give us a good collection.

Would it not be feasible to plan for a list of both active and associate members. the active to have voice in the direction of affairs, and the associate members to not have such voice, pay no dues, but to have an affiliation with us, for sake of influence and increasing interest on the part of the public. Had we but a good place of meeting it would be easier to carry out these suggestions. But not having this place of meeting, can we not make use of these suggestions or others which may be offered to hasten this desirable end?

I do not expect hasty acceptance of, or action upon any of these plans. Indeed, it would not be best to do so now. They are rather thrown out to stimulate us in this direction and with the hope that some good may grow out of them.

I am not unmindful of the efforts which have been made in this direction, but cannot we make another effort this year to place our society among the recognized educational factors of our city?